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MARTIAL LAW!

● Minister's murder 'huge blow' to Lanka peace

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka declared a state of emergency yesterday after the assassination of Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar in an attack blamed by police on Tamil rebels that threatens to undermine the peace process.

Force still an option Bush warns Iran

JERUSALEM: US President George W Bush said he could consider using force as a last resort to press Iran to give up its nuclear programme.

"All options are on the table," Bush, speaking at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, said in the interview broadcast on Israeli television yesterday.

Asked if that included the use of force, Bush replied: "The use of force is the last option for any president and you know, we've used force in the recent past to secure our country."

Iran angered the European Union and the US by resuming uranium conversion at the Isfahan plant last Monday.

Bush has also previously said that the US has not ruled out the possibility of military strikes. But US officials have played down media speculation they were planning military action against Iran.

Schroeder call - Page 17

President Chandrika Kumaratunga appealed for calm as officials accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of the shooting of the 73-year-old minister, a vociferous critic of the Tigers.

Kadirgamar died in hospital soon after snipers shot him three times in the head and chest at his home late on Friday in Colombo.

"From the style and weapons used we're convinced it's the work of the Tigers," police chief Chandra Fernando said.

The Tigers denied any involvement, but the govern-

ment said the statement was hard to believe.

The assassination further imperilled a three-year-old ceasefire already rocked by a spike in violence in recent months.

Scandinavian truce monitors also condemned the killing.

In Colombo, soldiers carried out door-to-door searches for the two snipers believed to be involved in the killing while police set up roadblocks and helicopters circled the sky.

Emergency rule gives security forces wide powers to arrest and detain suspects.



■ A US Bradley burns after a roadside bomb detonated in Sadr City, Baghdad, yesterday. An improvised explosive device detonated as an US military convoy drove by, killing one civilian. Statute vow - Page 18

Rough justice for fleeing thief

MANAMA: A thief who hit a salesgirl was accidentally run over by an off-duty policeman as he was trying to escape security guards at Bahrain Mall, sources told the GDN.

The Bahraini, aged in his early 20s, slapped the sales assistant before stealing BD136 from the cash register of a computer shop at the mall.

Security guards gave chase after hearing the woman's screams, but they did not have to run for long.

The thief ran through the mall car park and out into the road - where he ran into the side of a car being driven by the off-duty policeman, who had no idea what was happening.

"The cashier's screaming got the attention of one of

the security guards at the mall, who started running after the thief," sources said.

"Other security guards joined in the chase, which continued through the mall's parking area onto the main road.

"The car was travelling at a normal speed - around 80 kmph - but the thief was not looking where he was going and ran into the side of the car.

"There was a small dent where he hit it."

The thief was taken to Salmaniya Medical Complex for treatment to injuries before being transferred to police custody upon being discharged.

By NOREEN AL THAWADI

The world this morning

UK bombers 'freelancers'

LONDON: Groups behind the July London bomb attacks that killed 52 people and a failed attempt to strike again soon after appear to have been acting independently of an Al Qaeda mastermind abroad. *The Independent*, quoting police and intelligence officials, said it was also likely that four July 7 suicide bombers were probably not linked to another group of four who failed to blow up explosives on buses and Underground trains two weeks later. "All the talk about 'Mr Bigs' and Al Qaeda masterminds looks like something from a film script at the moment," police said. The report quoted one counter-terrorist source as saying: "The key point is that the events were not connected. It appears they were self-contained, rather than being organised by some kind of mastermind."

Crime shocker!

MANAMA: A Bahraini father had a narrow escape when his 14-year-old son electrified the main door to their Hamad Town home to foil thieves. The father was setting out for work in the morning and was just about to grab the handle to the aluminium door, when he noticed it was hooked up to electric wiring, according to our Arabic sister paper *Akhbar Al Khaleej*. He said his son got the idea from a film and thought he could thwart thieves who have been stealing doors from homes.

Preacher suspended

MANAMA: A cleric was reportedly suspended yesterday by the Islamic Affairs Ministry for remarks allegedly made during a mosque sermon on Friday about Zionism and sectarianism in the region. Shaikh Nasser Al Fadalah made the remarks at Busaiten Mosque, Islamic Affairs Under-Secretary Dr Farid Muftah told our Arabic sister paper *Akhbar Al Khaleej*.

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